

1 / Report of Meeting on
2 / INDIGENOUS FOODS AND NORTHERN NUTRITION

A meeting was held in Room 1048 of Centennial Tower on December 13, 1977 from 2:00 pm until approximately 3:20 pm. Participants in attendance were:

Dr. Jean Steckle, Nutrition Consultant, Department of National Health and Welfare;
Mr. Norm MacPherson, Director General, Federal Liaison Bureau, Government of the Northwest Territories;
Mr. Frank Fingland, Director, Northern Co-ordination and Report of Meeting on
INDIGENOUS FOODS AND NORTHERN NUTRITION
Mrs. Jean Goodwill, Representative on Nutritional Policy Committee, Indian Affairs Program, DIAND;
Dr. Marilyn McDowell, Representative on Nutritional Policy Committee, Northern Affairs Program, DIAND;
Mr. Bob Stephenson, Senior Transportation Economist, Economic Analysis Division, Northern Affairs Program, DIAND;
Mr. John Marquand, Research Officer, Economic Analysis Division, Northern Affairs Program, DIAND;
Mr. Donat Savoie, Chief, Northern Social Research Division, Northern Affairs Program, DIAND;
Mr. A.J. Kerr, Co-ordinator, Northern Laboratories and Grants Research, Northern Social Research Division, Northern Affairs Program, DIAND;
Ms. Mona Evans, Researcher, Northern Social Research Division, Northern Affairs Program, DIAND.

Mr. Fingland opened the meeting with a reference to the Minister's briefing on science policy in the North. In the discussion, the Northern Program research proposals concerned with indigenous foods and northern nutrition were mentioned. As the Minister with the overall responsibility for native people, he was concerned about what kind of short and long term action was underway to alleviate these problems. Mr. Fingland asked the group to give a quick reading of what programs are in place and what is being done.

Dr. Steckle began by stating that the Medical Services Branch of National Health and Welfare had the responsibility for the health of northern residents. A Nutritional Policy Committee has been formed and charged with the responsibility for looking into these problems and finding ways for possible action that would alleviate them. The guidelines were drafted to help in program development.

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In reply to Mr. Fingland's query as to whether the Nutritional Policy Committee would make action-oriented proposals, Dr. Steckle replied in the affirmative. She said that at the last meeting the Committee looked at the problem of the high cost of food in the North, the need for more information on communities (i.e. to enable long term rather than a "brush fire" approach), and the kinds of local development programs related to food such as fish canneries, reconstitution of milk, local bakeries, etc...

Dr. MacDowell stated that the Guidelines were written in action-oriented terms which would enable each program to measure its own progress.

Mr. Fingland suggested that rather than the capital intensive economy which was the former focus it may be best to look at ways and means of increasing production of the local economy. For example, fur handling could raise or lower the price for furs. Through lack of organization there is an enormous waste of protein in the North which could be put to better use. He asked if there were clearly definable short term goals that we could look at.

The participants of the Inuit Nutrition Workshop at Baker Lake in October 1977, expressed concern about the opportunities for exchange of food between communities, and modification and interpretation of various regulations such as game laws and health protection standards to enable this.

A discussion followed regarding regulations. It was stated that the game laws do not prohibit exchange. The regulations governing seal meat falls under seal protection regulations of the federal Department of Fisheries and Environment, and seal meat can be sold by native people to travellers.

Dr. Steckle suggested that an attempt should be made to expand the local food base, that use could be made of varied species.

Mr. Fingland asked how people might be educated to make the best choice of foods. For example, inadequate or junk foods such as soft drinks are probably handled by co-ops and other small entrepreneurs or outlets which should be included in attempts to solve the problem as well as the H.B.C.

In reply to Mr. Fingland's query as to what the Hudson Bay Company is planning to do, Drs. Steckle and MacDowell stated that H.B.C. has hired a nutritionist, Carol Pass, this fall who will develop their program, maybe pilot projects.

In reply to Mr. Fingland's question as to causes of poor nutrition, Dr. Steckle referred to the "soft drink, sugar dilemma".

Mrs. Goodwill suggested that it was the whole process of social change in the North. For example, the use of alcohol affects nutrition.

Mr. Savoie informed the group that a meeting was held recently in Yellowknife where interest was expressed by the Fish and Wildlife Service for the establishment of a co-ordinated program for better utilization of indigenous foods. Perhaps this is an area for "short term" action for this problem.

A discussion followed on the subject of community freezers and storage facilities. It was thought that most communities have freezers, that the problem may be with storage of food at airports. Mr. Fingland felt there was a need for an organizational network at the level of N.W.T. Government, H.B.C. and Co-ops.

A discussion followed on the role of social assistance in this problem. Because it is issued in cash, it may lead to poor selection of food.

Dr. Steckle stated that the concerns expressed at the last meeting were with lack of money to make ends meet and with exploring other methods of getting "land food".

Mr. Fingland said that he understood welfare rates were not inadequate and had recently been increased by 20%. He asked if a short term public education program, using media, was possible.

At the request of Mr. Fingland, Mr. MacPherson outlined some of the programs of the N.W.T. Government which are directed at this problem.

There is a co-ordinating committee of three people. Ann Sparham (nutritionist for MacKenzie and Inuvik zone, Medical Services Branch, Department of National Health and Welfare), Jill Christenson (nutritionist for Department of Social Development, G.N.W.T.), and Sheila Stanger (co-ordinator of Health and Social Education Programs for Department of Education, G.N.W.T.) form the committee.

The Department of Social Development has prime responsibility for nutrition. They have compiled a booklet entitled, "A Comprehensive Nutrition Program for the Northwest Territories". The program has not been implemented too well as there is a question of future responsibility between the Federal and Territorial departments of health.

The G.N.W.T. Department of Education in Frobisher Bay has put together a Manual on Nutrition. It will be ready early in 1978 and will be introduced into the school programs. (There is also a Home Management Consultant in the G.N.W.T. Department of Education in the Keewatin, Mary Hand.)

The Department of National Health and Welfare has two nutritionists in the North, Ann Sparham (forementioned) and Carol Huggett, Baffin and Keewatin zones, Medical Services Branch, stationed in Edmonton.

There is a school lunch program. Grants are made available through the Education Advisory Committee of each settlement and the Committee decides on the kind of food that will be provided (e.g. indigenous foods).

Mr. Kerr asked, for example, what was the policy of the Frobisher Bay hostel on food. Mr. MacPherson replied that the policy was definitely on country food. At Gordon Robertson high school in Frobisher everybody eats lunch there. A Montreal firm caters.

Mr. Fingland suggested that a systematic approach was required with delivery in the hands of the community. For example, a household to household approach with literature, information, and follow-up. If there is an adequate resource base and a minimal amount of cash for access then it becomes a matter of individual choice. There is a need to mount a massive, intensive campaign at the household level and school level.

Dr. Steckle mentioned the Users Workshop last March 1977, held at Baker Lake by National Health and Welfare, B.R.I.A. and Consumer Affairs where Consumer Affairs had an input. There is a need for store food education. She also mentioned a pilot project in Baker Lake where nutritional value of foods were colour coded. She also said the people in communities were anxious to handle programs themselves. Because cultural values are involved, there is a desire to control and shape programs themselves. The Community Health Representatives are very enthusiastic and would like to be involved. Consumer and Corporate Affairs might be willing through a summer job program to train local people to do this.

Mr. Fingland suggested that a systematic "network of contractual relationships" should be set up between organizations and government to deliver programs in the communities.

Dr. MacDowell stated that para-professionals want resource people and back up from government (for example, game laws).

Dr. Steckle said the Keewatin region was to meet on a nutritional program (Mary Hand). The communities were requesting education programs and the response should be by professional support.

Mr. Savoie suggested that programs might be identified at local levels. He asked if the Minister could support local initiatives.

Dr. MacDowell said the guidelines bring to mind the Industrial Development projects done in the past.

Mr. Fingland said we should identify the responsible group, short and long term projects and identify money.

Dr. Steckle suggested that a short term project might be to train local people. She suggested that communities be identified for pilot projects.

Mr. Fingland saw the latter as a long term project that should be part of research. He wanted to know what could be done in the next six months.

Drs. MacDowell and Steckle stated that T.V. commercials could possibly be done in Montreal or Frobisher with Northern input. Hope Spencer's role may be a resource.

Mr. Fingland asked for a sub group to sit down on short term plans, to examine what needs to be done (identify objectives), what is possible (formulate projects and programs), and what resources we have (identify money). The individual community design would be left to local people.

Drs. Steckle and MacDowell, Mr. MacPherson and Mona Evans were appointed to the group, and were asked to report back to the larger group which would meet again on Tuesday, December 20, 1977, again in Room 1048 (the time of the meeting was later changed from 1:00 pm to 9:00 am).

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